



SHROPSHIRE
**FARM
NEWS**

February 2024

While driving around trying to come up with something to write about for the newsletter one thing that kept coming to the forefront of my thoughts was the recent passing of Martin Jones. No one would argue the point if I would refer to him as one of the most colourful characters of the local farming community. Martin left a lasting impression with most people that met him and so he did with me.

I remember my first visit to Green farm, I was called in for a calving. It was dark and I was drawn to this small building on the yard with seriously haunting music and a bright glow coming from the door. I entered the tiny parlour that appeared to be filled with a giant man with a beaming smile. "Hello there vet'nary." (I later looked it up and the song was "Hope there's someone" by Anthony and the Johnsons. If you look it up and listen you will understand what I mean by haunting). Afterwards, when driving home from a successful delivery my mind was still reeling from this apparition of a friendly giant in a tiny parlour at Green farm. An image in my head formed of Martin as the Green Giant of the canned vegetable tins. This image wasn't as wrong as you might think since a few years later Martin entertained us at one of our more memorable Christmas parties. He was happy to dress up in tights or cross dress before it became all the rage. His sketches that evening featured us vets and plenty laughs were had at our expense.

Over the years we got to know each other better and Martin was never one to shy away from taking the Mickey. One summer's day I turned up sporting my new sunglasses; fancy, wrap around ones that changed colour in bright sunlight. However, on that day there was no sun and the glasses had a yellowish tinge. Martin took one glance at me and said with a smirk: "I asked for a vet, not Ali G!"

On one of my more recent encounters at Green farm I was meant to calve a heifer but before I could get to her, she had managed to free herself from the crush and knocked Martin to the floor. He was on his back shouting: "Roel, Roel, help me!" With some loud shouting and star jumps I managed to get her to charge at me instead. Martin was saved to farm another day and the heifer was happy with her calf. I questioned why he still put himself through this, why not pack in and live a little

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bit? I've come to realise that was a stupid question. Farming is more than living a bit, it's larger than life, there is no life without it and I can't think of a more meaningful job to make a living. I raise a glass to Martin and all the farmers that passed away over the years, giving colour to our lives. We don't miss them just as clients but also as friends.

Roel

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Battling the Mastitis Moving Target

With a dairy cows environment constantly changing so too is the udder health challenge and risk of mastitis. As soon as a cow gets an udder infection leading to mastitis, she is a significant risk factor to other cows in the herd to become a mastitis statistic and add to the losses.

What's the best tube to use should be low down the list of questions. How to reduce the risk should be the priority.

To recap we can classify the causes of mastitis in to 2 basic categories, those from the environment and those from other cows (or people), contagious causes. If we think about the environment, it is our aim to create an environment that is difficult for the mastitis causes to survive and multiply. In a nutshell this is an environment that is clean, dry and as most bedding types are a source of food for bacteria, bedding is replenished regularly enough before bacteria multiply to excessive levels.

When considering contagious causes of mastitis, the key is to avoid direct or indirect contact with an infected cow or person. Efforts here are concentrated in the milking parlour where we rely on gloves and chemicals but also identifying high risk cows is essential so that where possible these cows can be handled at the end of milking before the parlour wash.

Milking routine and its effect on udder health is heavily dependant on people and the ability of the staff to follow an effective routine repetitively. If a routine is not being followed, the process may need reviewing to ensure compliance by simplification or automation.

With the best management in the world, the environment is still not going to be sterile so there will always be a challenge to udder health present. Because of this its essential to also consider the cows own ability to cope with any challenge. Variable forage quality this year has predisposed some herd to deficiencies that have led to compromised immunity within herd and increasing the risk of mastitis. Deficiencies may give rise to an increase in other diseases on farm and so blood sampling may be necessary to ensure adequate supplementation.

If the udder health scales are tipped in the favour of infective bacteria, then some key information gathered can give you a head start in tipping it back in your favour.

- Collect and freeze mastitis samples in sterile containers. This enables us to build up a pattern of the most common causes of mastitis and its possible origin.
- Record clinical cases. This will give us an indication of any trends in stage of lactation, group or seasonality.
- Cell count information. This will give information on subclinical cases and cure rates or chronically infected cows impacting on the bulk cell count.

If your mastitis rates or cell count is above your acceptable target speak to one of us about doing some data analysis and testing to help narrow down the areas to target.

Sean

Lambing Course

This month see the long-awaited return of Shropshire Farm Vets' ever-popular Lambing Course! This combined practical and theory-based day, run by Nathan covers everything you need to know to prepare you for the lambing season - including practicing on the 'lambing simulator'.

Topics covered include:

- Management pre-lambing
- The lambing process – what to use, how to use it, when to call for help!
- Post-lambing care
- Common health issues of ewes and lambs and how to treat them

Every year we get a mixture of complete novices through to more experienced shepherds; but everyone goes away having learnt something, and we always get excellent feedback.

The course will be held at the practice: Shropshire Farm Vets, Unit 5, The Depot, Hanwood, Shropshire, SY5 8NY, on Saturday 24th February, 9.30am – 4pm and includes lunch. In order to offer good practical training, places are limited to a maximum of eight. Contact the practice on 01743 860920 for further details and to book your place.

Nathan





Johne's disease – more processors tighten their restrictions

In recent years we have seen an increase in the number of processors limiting supply of milk from animals with high Johne's risk status. Herds where their Johne's position exceeds this level must take steps to reduce their risk or jeopardise the future status of their contract.

From January, the **UK's largest milk buyer** increased the proportion of their contracts with just such restrictions. These state that no more than 5% of the herd contributing to the bulk tank (so saleable milk) may be classified as "Red cows". Red cows are those that have ever had two or more positive Johne's results (over 30% seropositivity) within four tests. Additionally, NO animals that are classified as "Priority Cull" (two consecutive scores over 60%, or one score over 100% seropositivity) or those with clinical signs suggestive of Johne's disease may contribute to milk sold from the farm.

The increasing number of milk buyers imposing restrictions, and the tightening of restrictions of those already requiring them is something that we have been discussing for year. This is likely to increase across the remainder of the industry in the future. Johne's disease as a focus of the dairy industry has been relatively quiet of late; but this move illustrates the industries continuing commitment to keeping the UK as world-leaders in the global campaign to control the prevalence of this disease.

Key take home messages of this are:

- **Further contacts will inevitably follow suit** in the future
- **Non-engagement** with adequate Johne's testing and control strategies NOW; and **hoping that simply culling high risk cows in the future to reduce numbers** (without working to reduce potential future production of high-risk animals) is likely to be **extremely expensive and ultimately ineffective**
- Undertaking **appropriate** (sufficient numbers and frequency) **testing** and using this, **working alongside your vet** to implement robust Johne's control strategies **NOW** is your **best chance** to control your herd's status. This is particularly true if your herd's Red risk status is 3% or more

Every farm is different and there are multiple strategies that can be used to reduce existing and future herd risk; whatever the Red cow rate. Please contact the practice if you would like further assistance in managing your herds Johne's status.

Nathan

Schmallenberg Update

It will not have escaped your notice that the country is currently experiencing an outbreak of Schmallenberg virus. This unpleasant disease causes no symptoms in the adult cow or sheep other than short term milk drop in lactating animals. However, if infected while pregnant, the virus can cause newborn lambs and calves to show various brain or spinal cord deformities, rigid joints, and neurological deficits such as blindness, incoordination, seizures and inability to suck. The presenting symptoms will depend on when during pregnancy the animal was infected.

This disease is passed from animal to animal via a biting midge, and it is thought extremely unlikely that direct infection between animals can happen without the insect as a vector. The disease is not zoonotic and there is no risk to humans.

If your flock is unfortunate enough to have been struck by the disease this year, there is unfortunately frustratingly little that you can do at this stage. Testing to confirm that Schmallenberg is definitely to blame for your losses can be carried out by the VLA (they require the head), or the mother can be blood tested for antibodies to confirm that exposure to SBV has taken place. In the case of sheep abortion where SBV is suspected but not confirmed, the usual guidelines on isolating the aborted ewe and burning any aborted material (if not submitted to the VLA) and contaminated bedding should be followed, in case enzootic abortion or salmonella are implicated.

Animals which have been infected with SBV during pregnancy will have lifelong immunity and subsequently should not suffer from the disease again. Those infected outside of pregnancy will also develop lifelong immunity and will never be clinically affected. Historically, the vaccine response to a SBV outbreak has been excellent, and it is possible although not guaranteed that once the strain has been definitively identified, a vaccine will again be available.

John



A Note from Dispensary

We would like to ask that clients please make every effort to phone ahead to make drugs orders before arriving to collect them. This gives us time to have the medicines authorised by a vet before dispensing them, which is a legal requirement. If you have not ordered your medicines in advance and there is no vet in the practice to authorise

them at the time you visit, we may not be able to dispense the drugs.

Remember that we offer a daily delivery service – medicines ordered before 9am will be delivered to your doorstep. This service is free where the value of the order is more than £50 + VAT

Thankyou!

TB UPDATE

This month we tested 12,237 cattle over 57 tests. There were 42 reactors and 34 inconclusive reactors.

EMERGENCY CONTACT NUMBERS

ALISTAIR MACPHERSON	07909 517184	CHLOE DAVIES	07813 826333
TIM O'SULLIVAN	07909 517479	CALIN BOGDAN	07425 314090
ROEL DRIESEN	07813 833385	KATE MARTIN	07534 812696
JAMES MARSDEN	07876 443950	CHRIS SHINGLER	07903 864086
NATHAN LOEWENSTEIN	07815 543546	DREW PLUSE	07376 617477
JOHN HEMINGWAY	07496 305412	RYAN LUNT	07939 851860
SEAN HUGHES	07973 567367	KATHY JONES	07377 043596
MIHAIL STOICA	07948 475669	ANNABEL CHESTER	07944 674229
DUARTE MONTEIRO	07481 128686	MATT ASHLEY	07528 097594

Please keep a note of the mobile numbers for the vets should you ever need them

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